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letzten geheimnisvollen Kern, gleichsam bis auf das Protoplasma der Seele zu verfolgen' (p. 45). For instance, the way in which the at first enigmatic and ultimately silent and complaisant *gemahel* of the medieval version becomes a vulnerable, psychologically consistent young girl 'an der Grenze der Jungfräulichkeit' in Hauptmann's version demonstrates powers of psychological sympathy with the female character not apparent in Hartmann: *quidquid recipitur, recipitur ad modum recipientis*. This book cannot be said to have entirely displaced Tardel's old work as an introduction to the literary metamorphoses of *Der Arme Heinrich*.

UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM NEIL THOMAS

Unheimliche Wiederkehr. Interpretationen zu den gespenstischen Romanfiguren bei Ewers, Meyrink, Soyka, Spunda und Strobl. By CLEMENS RUTHNER. (Studien zur phantastischen Literatur, 10) Meitingen: Corian. 1993. 210 pp. DM 69.

Clemens Ruthner focuses here on five German/Austrian writers of fantastic literature who published in the early years of this century, two comparatively well known (Hanns Heinz Ewers and Gustav Meyrink), the others more obscure. He reminds us that world literature is shot through with ghosts, demons, vampires, zombies, and so on, and takes us back to Homer (the reference to Christ as a 'revenant', however, and the juxtaposition with Defoe's Mrs Veal strike a somewhat discordant note). The author asks us to excuse the cursory and fragmentary nature of his study and explains that a more substantial dissertation is to come, a curious and unnecessary disclaimer that prejudices the effect of this book. The central argument is that the fantastic (at least as it is manifest in the writers under discussion) is not a flight from reality but an expression of fears and inhibitions, which relates directly to the society in which these writers found themselves. Freud and the Romantics are quickly dispatched and the discussion settles on Hanns Heinz Ewers's 1920 novel *Vampir*. This 'verwilderter Roman in Fetzen und Farben' certainly has its *femme fatale* (Lotte Lewi) who enjoys biting and sucking, but this is a red herring: the protagonist is the vampire and the blood is the blood shed in the carnage of the First World War. The vampire image becomes a metaphor for the revanchist tendencies prevalent at the time; there is no conventional Dracula here, but an ambiguous hero (Hanns Heinz Ewers's later addiction to National Socialism is also acknowledged). The 'politicisation of the fantastic' is also traced in a discussion of Karl Hans Strobl's *Umsturz ins Jenseits* (also 1920); global chaos and the disintegration of matter are not caused by the interception of metaphysical forms but are closely linked to the disturbances of 1918–19, where the descriptions are intended as a polemical reaction. A perceptive section is that on Ewers's *Alraune* and Franz Spunda's *Devachan* (1921); we are here in the realm of phantom sexuality. The mandrake-woman is sufficiently well known, but 'Rmoahal' less so: this is a slimy, electrified substance stemming from some 'Urschleim' in a cave in Madagascar and installed in Devachan, a sort of Viennese sex shop. Too much 'Rmoahal' is, apparently, debilitating, and Ruthner stresses the proximity of Eros and Thanatos, the ambivalent attitude towards female sexuality prevailing at the turn of the century. The last work to be discussed is Otto Soyka's *Eva Morsini* (1923); the heroine seems to be a reincarnation of the Tzarina Catherine II. An interesting parallel is drawn between this story and Vernon Lee's *Oke of Okehurst*. Ruthner again draws parallels with Soyka's own society and the ambivalent relationship between contemporary life and *ancien régime*. Ruthner has uncovered some fascinating

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material and contributed in no small way to the study of the fantastic; we can no longer enjoy it as escapism, but find our own neuroses reflected and distorted.

UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS RAYMOND FURNESS

The Mirror and the Word: Modernism, Literary Theory, and Georg Trakl. By ERIC B. WILLIAMS. (Texts and Contexts) Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press. 1993. 350 pp. £38.

This book undertakes a difficult negotiation between the exacting claims of Trakl's notoriously difficult text and the large demands of an ambitious cultural historical and theoretical context. The priority given to modernism and literary theory in the title reflects the space given over in the first half of the book to a wide-ranging exposition of aesthetic developments from the Enlightenment, via Romanticism, to modernism and postmodernism, and to the mapping-out of complex critical theoretical guidelines taken from poststructuralism and, more especially, Lacanian psychoanalysis. While Romantic reflection theory, and not least the model of Novalis, seems especially apt here, the potted accounts of Gottsched, Lessing, Einstein, and Frege, amongst others, lead the argument to spread unduly on the level of a general digest. Ultimately, however, a good deal of the initial investment is returned as a frame for the tight textual focus of the second part of the volume. Here the author shows a nice sense of the necessary balance between chronological overview and minute analysis of individual texts (with impressively sustained readings, in particular, of 'Melancholia' and 'Grodek').

The expository section is most useful where it focuses more precisely on the interlinked programmatic themes of the book: the mirror and the word. Eric Williams identifies the crisis of specular, mimetic models of aesthetic reproduction as the key moment in what he sees, after Foucault, as the epistemic break in late-eighteenth-century European culture. Through this break into modernity the mirror is seen to become an instrument of projection rather than representation, one fraught with the effects of symbolic mediation, the unreliable constructions of language.

Trakl's poetry is judged, then, as an elegiac response to the loss of a primal visual reciprocity between the self and its objects, and as a document of the ruptured interdependence of image and word in the literature of modernity. The texts are shown to arrange varying degrees of compromise between symbolically organized narratives and the more primary forms of discourse associated with the semiotic in Kristeva's sense. By probing certain paradigmatic patterns, Williams reveals the particular poetological potency of the key motifs of the mirror and of song/silence in their various guises. In such constellations as the 'dark flutes' of 'Grodek', he shows how the structures of vision and sound combine, as the dense, reiterative texture of Trakl's poetry enacts variations on the mythopoeic configuration of Narcissus and Orpheus.

There are one or two infelicities in the translations of poems, especially slips of tense; Trakl's work requires closely attentive translation as well as scrupulous critical reading. Where an author casts his contextual net so wide, errors in detail are also likely to creep in at this level; thus the publication of Otto Rank's essay 'Der Doppelgänger' is put at 1925 rather than 1914, which leads to a mistaken account of his exchange with Freud. Encouraged by the significant strains of intertextuality in the poetry, the author also organizes some rather random encounters between Trakl and Goethe to accompany the well-established poetic dialogues with Hölderlin, Novalis, and Rimbaud. But these are small weaknesses in an otherwise

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